



OPIOID LEARNING
AND RESPONSE
COLLABORATIVE



Culturally Responsive Programs Toolkit

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

SELF-ASSESSMENT

PRACTICE GUIDE

Building humility, equity, and community-centered care
across programs and organizations.

2026



Our Toolkit

Why This Culturally Responsive Toolkit is Helpful

In today's diverse communities, programs and services are most effective when they are designed with cultural responsiveness in mind. This toolkit is intended to help organizations, teams, and practitioners integrate culturally responsive practices into their work, ensuring that all individuals feel respected, understood, and supported. By fostering inclusivity, equity, and cultural humility, programs can better meet the unique needs of the communities they serve, improve outcomes, and strengthen trust and engagement.

This toolkit is designed to be practical and user-friendly. It provides guidance, frameworks, checklists, templates, and activities to help you assess your current practices, identify areas for growth, and implement culturally responsive strategies. Whether you are just beginning to explore cultural responsiveness or are seeking ways to strengthen existing efforts, this toolkit offers tools to support continuous improvement and reflection at every stage of program development and delivery.

This toolkit is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, it is a flexible resource designed to guide thoughtful action, foster inclusivity, and support lasting, equitable impact.



How to Use This Toolkit

01 Explore

Explore the sections that are most relevant to your role or program area. Each section includes key concepts, actionable guidance, and resources.

02 Apply

Apply the tools and templates to your organization's processes, policies, and programs. Utilize the checklists and self-assessment exercises to pinpoint your strengths and areas for improvement.

03 Reflect

Reflect on your practice. Cultural responsiveness is an ongoing journey; the toolkit encourages continuous learning and adaptation.

04 Engage

Engage your community. Wherever possible, involve the people you serve in shaping and evaluating programs to ensure that your efforts are authentic and meaningful.



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Section 1:



Foundations of Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness is the ability to understand, respect, and appropriately respond to the cultural contexts, strengths, needs, and lived experiences of individuals and communities. At its core, it requires humility, curiosity, intentionality, and a commitment to equity. These foundational principles help guide culturally grounded, relationship-centered, and community-informed programs.

Key Principles

Respect & Dignity

Respect and dignity are the foundation of culturally responsive practice. Every individual brings a unique history, identity, and strengths that deserve to be acknowledged and honored. This principle requires organizations to treat all people as experts in their own experiences, avoid assumptions, and foster environments where people feel valued, safe, and heard.

Respect goes beyond politeness—it's about truly seeing the whole person and honoring their cultural and personal identity.

Cultural Humility

Cultural humility is a lifelong practice of self-reflection, learning, and recognizing one's own biases and limitations. Unlike cultural competence, which implies mastery, cultural humility acknowledges that no one can ever fully understand every culture—and that we must remain open to learning from those we serve.

It involves:

- Reflecting on personal and organizational power
- Seeking to understand rather than judge
- Being willing to repair harm when misunderstandings occur
- Cultural humility creates conditions for trust and authentic relationships.



Inclusiveness:

Inclusiveness means designing environments, services, and organizational structures that welcome, represent, and value all people. It requires intentional efforts to ensure that people of diverse identities, including those based on race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, ability, age, and lived experience, can participate fully.

Inclusive programs:

- Reduce physical, cultural, and systemic barriers
- Provide language-accessible communication
- Incorporate multiple perspectives in planning and decision-making
- Inclusiveness strengthens belonging and improves outcomes.

Equity & Justice:

Equity and justice focus on ensuring all people have access to fair treatment, opportunities, and resources, recognizing that communities experience unequal barriers due to historical and ongoing systemic inequities.

This principle moves organizations beyond equality (where everyone gets the same) toward equity (where everyone gets what they need to thrive).

Practicing equity requires:

- Identifying and addressing systemic barriers
- Examining institutional policies and practices for bias
- Centering the voices and needs of communities most impacted by inequities

Programs grounded in equity advance social and structural change.

Authenticity:

Authenticity means showing up with sincerity, transparency, and follow-through. Communities can sense when engagement is performative or transactional; authenticity builds trust.

Authentic practice includes:

- Being honest about what an organization can and cannot do
- Building relationships that extend beyond program needs
- Demonstrating consistency between words and actions

Authenticity fosters credibility and long-term partnership.



Continuous Improvement:

Culturally responsive programs are never “finished.” Communities evolve, needs change, and learning is an ongoing process.

Continuous improvement requires:

- Regularly gathering feedback from participants and partners
- Reviewing data with a cultural and equity lens
- Adjusting programs to better align with community needs
- Reflecting as individuals and as an organization

By embracing learning and adaptation, programs stay responsive, relevant, and grounded in community realities.

Community Voice & Collaboration:

Community members are experts in their own lives, and culturally responsive programs are developed in collaboration with communities, not for them.

Meaningful collaboration includes:

- Engaging community members early and often
- Valuing lived experience in leadership roles
- Compensating individuals for their time and expertise
- Building long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships

When community voices guide decisions, programs are more relevant, effective, and trusted.

Section 2:



Organizational Readiness

A culturally responsive organization begins with honest self-assessment, clear accountability, and planning. Organizational readiness reflects the structures, policies, people, and practices that support equitable and culturally-grounded and culturally-humble services. This section outlines the five core areas of readiness and provides guidance on what culturally responsive practice looks like in action.

Leadership & Governance

Leadership sets the tone for cultural responsiveness across the organization. Strong governance ensures that cultural equity is embedded in the mission, policies, and decision-making processes.

Key Elements of Readiness

- **Clear Commitment:** Leaders consistently communicate the importance of equity and cultural responsiveness in internal and external messaging.
- **Policy Alignment:** Organizational policies reflect anti-discrimination, anti-racism, and culturally informed practices.
- **Diverse Decision-Makers:** Boards, committees, and advisory groups include representation from communities served. It is also necessary that the organizational culture supports, considers, and values all contributors equitably.
- **Accountability Structures:** DEI goals are built into strategic plans, leadership evaluations, and organizational outcomes.
- **Lived Experience Leadership:** Individuals with lived experience are meaningfully engaged in leadership, governance, and program design.

What Readiness Looks Like: Programs feel welcoming, relevant, and tailored, resulting in better engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes.



Data & Evaluation

Culturally responsive organizations use data respectfully, interpret it through an equity lens, and engage communities in shaping evaluation priorities.

Key Elements of Readiness

- **Ethical Data Collection:** Data is gathered with transparency, sensitivity, and respect for cultural norms and preferences.
- **Disaggregation:** Data is analyzed by race, ethnicity, gender, language, and other social identities to identify disparities.
- **Community-Defined Outcomes:** Success indicators reflect what communities value—not only what the organization prioritizes.
- **Participatory Evaluation:** Community members contribute to designing questions, making meaning of data, and recommending improvements.
- **Accessible Reporting:** Findings are shared in formats that are understandable, culturally appropriate, and easily accessible.

What Readiness Looks Like: Evaluation processes uncover inequities, elevate community voice, and drive meaningful improvement.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is central to cultural responsiveness. Effective engagement is intentional, reciprocal, and grounded in trust.

Key Elements of Readiness

- **Early and Ongoing Involvement:** Community members participate in planning, implementing, and evaluating programs—not just at the end.
 - **Relationship Building:** Engagement focuses on long-term relationships, not one-time consultations.
 - **Representation:** Diverse voices—youth, elders, cultural groups, people with lived experience—are included and valued.
-



- **Compensation & Reciprocity:** Communities are compensated for time, expertise, and contributions.
- **Partnership with Cultural Organizations:** Collaborations with grassroots groups, faith-based communities, and culturally specific organizations enhance relevance and trust.

What Readiness Looks Like: Communities view themselves as partners, not participants, and take ownership of programs and services that affect them.

Workforce & Training

A culturally responsive workforce is diverse, supported, and equipped with the knowledge and skills to work effectively across cultures.

Key Elements of Readiness

- **Ongoing Training:** Staff receive regular training on cultural humility, anti-bias practices, trauma-informed care, and inclusive communication.
- **Reflective Practice:** Staff are encouraged to reflect on personal beliefs, biases, and assumptions and understand how these affect service delivery.
- **Workforce Diversity:** Hiring, promotion, and retention practices support a workforce that reflects the demographics of the communities served.
- **Supportive Supervision:** Supervisors incorporate cultural reflection into coaching, supervision, and performance evaluations.
- **Valuing Lived Experience:** Individuals with lived experience are recruited, supported, and recognized as essential contributors.

What Readiness Looks Like: Staff feel confident adapting services to cultural needs and collaborating respectfully with diverse communities.



Programs & Services

Programs should be designed and delivered in ways that are accessible, relevant, and culturally aligned with the people and communities served.

Key Elements of Readiness

- **Culturally Relevant Materials:** Program content, imagery, language, and examples reflect community values, identities, and traditions.
- **Language Access:** Interpretation, translation, and plain-language materials are readily available.
- **Flexible Delivery Models:** Program times, locations, and formats are adapted to meet community preferences and cultural rhythms.
- **Strengths-Based Approach:** Programs build on cultural assets rather than focusing only on needs or deficits.
- **Cultural Brokers:** Partnerships with cultural navigators or community leaders strengthen trust and communication.

What Readiness Looks Like: Programs feel welcoming, relevant, and tailored, resulting in better engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes.

Organizational Readiness Checklist

This checklist helps organizations assess their readiness to deliver culturally responsive, equitable, and community-centered services. Evaluating key areas—leadership, workforce, programs, data practices, and community engagement—provides a clear snapshot of current strengths and areas for improvement. Using this tool supports planning, improves service quality, amplifies the voices of people with lived experience, and ensures programs align with the cultural needs and priorities of the communities they serve. It also creates a baseline to measure progress over time and guide continuous improvement.



01 Rate each item from 1–5.

Rate each item from 1–5 based on how well it is currently implemented in your organization:

1 = Not at all

5 = Fully in place

02 Review each domain.

Review each domain **(A–E)** to assess strengths and identify gaps in:

- Leadership
- Workforce
- Programs & Services
- Data & Evaluation
- Community Engagement

03 Score honestly and consistently.

Score honestly and consistently by using input from staff, leadership, and community partners when possible.

04 Identify priority areas.

Identify priority areas by flagging items rated **1–3** for improvement and **4–5** as strengths to sustain.

05 Create an action plan.

Create an action plan based on your results. Focus on areas that have the most significant impact on cultural responsiveness.

06 Reassess periodically.

Reassess periodically (e.g., quarterly or annually) to track progress and update priorities.

Important Note About Readiness and Continuous Improvement:

Many items in this checklist are ongoing practices rather than one-time tasks. Culturally responsive practice requires continuous reflection, adaptation, and improvement.

When rating each item, consider not only whether it exists, but how consistently it is implemented, monitored, and strengthened over time. The purpose of this assessment is to support continuous improvement, recognizing that cultural responsiveness is an ongoing journey that evolves with the needs of the communities served.



A. Leadership & Governance

- ☐ Leadership openly communicates commitment to cultural responsiveness
- ☐ Organizational mission/values reflect equity and inclusion
- ☐ Policies support anti-discrimination and anti-bias practices
- ☐ Leadership engages in cultural humility and DEI training
- ☐ Advisory groups or councils reflect community diversity
- ☐ Decision-making includes people with lived experience

B. Workforce & Training

- ☐ Staff receive routine training on cultural humility
- ☐ Staff understand bias, racism, stigma, and historical trauma
- ☐ Lived experience is valued in hiring and program planning
- ☐ HR practices support workforce diversity and retention
- ☐ Staff competencies include cultural responsiveness
- ☐ Staff reflect the demographics of the population served

C. Programs & Services

- ☐ Programs incorporate cultural values, norms, and community priorities
- ☐ Program materials are culturally relevant
- ☐ Services are accessible across cultures and languages
- ☐ Logistics fit community needs
- ☐ Cultural brokers/community partners are integrated
- ☐ Services use trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches

D. Data & Evaluation

- ☐ Data is collected with cultural sensitivity
- ☐ Data is disaggregated
- ☐ Evaluation includes community-defined success indicators
- ☐ Feedback loops support ongoing improvement
- ☐ Data is shared transparently with stakeholders

E. Community Engagement

- ☐ Community participates in program design
- ☐ Partnerships are active and reciprocal
- ☐ Engagement strategies support trust-building
- ☐ Feedback is routinely incorporated
- ☐ Compensation provided for community input
- ☐ Culturally specific organizations engaged

Section 3:



Building Culturally Responsive Programs

Step-by-Step Framework:

Building culturally responsive programs requires intentional planning, authentic partnerships, and ongoing reflection and evaluation. This section outlines a step-by-step framework to help organizations design, deliver, and continuously strengthen programs that reflect and honor community identities, values, and needs.

Learn about the Community

Before designing or adapting a program, organizations must develop a strong, culturally informed understanding of the communities they serve.

Key Activities

- Form community advisory groups that include youth, elders, cultural leaders, people with lived experience, and representatives from community-based organizations.
- Conduct listening sessions or focus groups to gather stories, recommendations, and cultural insights.
- Compensate community members for time, expertise, and emotional labor.
- Share decision-making power by co-developing goals, outcomes, and program structures.
- Use culturally appropriate communication (e.g., multilingual materials, trusted messengers).

Guiding Questions



- What are the cultural identities and strengths within the community?
- What systemic or structural challenges impact participation?
- What past experiences with institutions shape trust or mistrust?

Outcome: A holistic picture of the community's cultural context, strengths, needs, and priorities—serving as the foundation for all program decisions.

Engage Community Members

Culturally responsive programs are developed in collaboration **with** the community, rather than being delivered **to** them. Engagement should be reciprocal, ongoing, and inclusive of diverse voices.

Key Activities

- Form community advisory groups that include youth, elders, cultural leaders, people with lived experience, and representatives from community-based organizations.
- Conduct listening sessions or focus groups to gather stories, recommendations, and cultural insights.
- Compensate community members for time, expertise, and emotional labor.
- Share decision-making power by co-developing goals, outcomes, and program structures.
- Use culturally appropriate communication (e.g., multilingual materials, trusted messengers).

Engagement Principles

- Honor lived experience as expertise
- Build trust through transparency
- Avoid extractive engagement (e.g., gathering input without follow-through)

Outcome: A shared vision for the program and stronger trust, buy-in, and accountability between the organization and community.

Adapt or Design Programs



Using community insights, organizations create or refine programs to reflect the cultural realities, strengths, and preferences of their communities.

Key Activities

- **Adapt materials and curriculum:** Ensure language, imagery, examples, and concepts align with cultural values and norms.
- **Modify program delivery:** Adjust the format, hours, location, and facilitation approaches based on community preferences.
- **Integrate cultural practices and assets:** Include cultural traditions, storytelling, healing practices, or community rituals where appropriate.
- **Ensure accessibility:** Provide translation services, childcare, transportation assistance, and trauma-informed approaches.
- **Create flexible program structures:** Allow adaptation to different cultural groups without losing fidelity to core components.

Design Principles

- Use strengths-based approaches
- Center the community's definitions of success
- Avoid stereotypes and cultural assumptions
- Ensure adaptations maintain respect and alignment with cultural practices

Outcome: A program that is relevant, respectful, culturally grounded, and more likely to lead to meaningful engagement and outcomes.

Implement with Cultural Humility

Program implementation requires staff who are reflective, adaptable, and committed to honoring the cultural identities of participants.

Key Activities



- Train staff and facilitators in cultural humility, anti-bias practice, trauma-informed care, and inclusive communication.
- Use culturally responsive facilitation techniques:
 - Check for understanding frequently
 - Use plain language and visual supports
 - Recognize power dynamics
 - Seek consent and provide options
- Create welcoming environments that reflect diverse cultures (artwork, signage, language access, sensory considerations).
- Build relational trust through empathy, consistency, and respect.
- Address misunderstandings respectfully and repair harm when needed.

Implementation Principles

- Stay flexible and responsive
- Prioritize dignity and psychological safety
- Invite feedback throughout the process
- Ensure staff reflect the community served whenever possible

Outcome: A high-quality program experience where participants feel safe, respected, and genuinely valued.

Evaluate & Improve

Using community insights, organizations create or refine programs to reflect the cultural realities, strengths, and preferences of their communities.

Key Activities



- Use community-defined success indicators (e.g., improved trust, cultural connection, family engagement—not just clinical or output measures).
- Collect data respectfully using culturally appropriate tools and methods.
- Disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, gender, language, and other identity factors to identify disparities.
- Engage community members in interpreting data and recommending improvements.
- Regularly adapt the program based on what is learned.
- Close the feedback loop by sharing findings back with the community in accessible ways.

Evaluation Principles

- Strengths-based analysis
- Transparency in methods and reporting
- Collaborative interpretation of results
- Action-oriented continuous improvement

Outcome: A program that evolves with community needs, reduces inequities, and strengthens cultural alignment over time.



Section 4:

Practical Tools & Templates

Effective programs are not one-size-fits-all. To be culturally responsive and community-centered, programs must continually gather information, reflect on their practices, and adapt to the unique needs and strengths of the communities they serve. This section will provide practical tools and templates to guide these processes. Staff can use these resources to document community context, adapt programming, engage in self-reflection, and collect participant feedback. These tools are designed to support ongoing learning, thoughtful adaptation, and meaningful engagement, ensuring programs operate with equity, cultural humility, efficiency and effectiveness.

Community Landscape

Why it matters: Understanding the community is foundational to culturally responsive programming. The Community Landscape Template helps staff systematically capture key information about community demographics, cultural practices, existing resources, barriers, and strengths. By creating a clear picture of the community, programs can make informed decisions about outreach, programming, and partnerships.

How to use it: Staff can complete this template before launching a program or periodically update it as community needs evolve. Consider consulting community members, local organizations, and publicly available data to ensure accuracy and completeness. Be sure to identify the responsible person/timeline for each item in the following templates.

Purpose of the following template: To help program staff gather and organize key information about the communities they serve, ensuring programs are culturally responsive and meet local needs.

Community Landscape Template

Section	Details to Capture	Notes/ Examples
Community Name		e.g., Springfield Neighborhood
Population Size & Demographics	Age, gender, race/ethnicity, languages spoken, socioeconomic indicators	Use recent census or community data
Key Cultural Practices & Beliefs	Traditions, celebrations, norms, and community values	Consider how these might influence program engagement
Common Community Needs / Priorities	Health, education, housing, employment, social support	Include insights from community leaders and residents
Existing Services & Resources	Local organizations, support groups, clinics, schools	Include contact info and service type
Barriers to Access	Transportation, language, stigma, cost, digital divide	Identify structural and social barriers
Community Strengths	Existing networks, active groups, and resilience factors	Focus on assets that can support program success
Notes / Observations	Staff reflections or additional information	

Program Adaptation Worksheet



Why it matters: Even evidence-based programs may need adjustments to fit the cultural and contextual realities of a specific community. The Program Adaptation Worksheet helps staff identify where changes may be required, propose adaptations, anticipate challenges, and plan for implementation while maintaining the program’s core elements. If using a curriculum, reach out to the author to see whether any identified adaptations have proven successful for your audience’s needs.

How to use it: Review each component of your program through the lens of cultural relevance and accessibility. Gather input from staff, participants, and community stakeholders to inform adaptations. Use this worksheet to track decisions and ensure that adaptations are thoughtful and documented.

Purpose: To guide program staff in reviewing and adapting existing programs to fit the community context better while maintaining fidelity to core evidence-based practices.

Program Component	e.g., Group Sessions	e.g., Educational Materials	e.g., Outreach
Current Approach	Weekly in-person	English-only handouts	Flyers at local clinics
Community Feedback and Insights	Preference for hybrid sessions	Many residents speak Spanish	Residents rely on social media
Proposed Adaptation	Offer an option for online participation	Translate materials; include visual aids	Add Instagram and community WhatsApp group outreach
Potential Challenges	Tech access may be limited	Translation quality	Staff capacity
Implementation Notes	Provide training on platform use	Partner with local translators	Assign staff lead

Staff Reflection Journal Prompts

Why it matters: Cultural responsiveness is a continual learning process. Reflection helps staff recognize their own assumptions, biases, and areas for improvement, and identify opportunities to engage more effectively and support the community.

How to use it: Encourage staff to regularly set aside time for reflection—daily, weekly, or after key interactions. These prompts guide critical thinking and self-assessment, helping staff connect insights to action. Reflections can be private, shared in supervision, or used to inform discussions about program improvement.

Purpose: To encourage program staff to engage in ongoing self-assessment, critical reflection, and growth related to cultural responsiveness.

Prompts:

1. What assumptions did I make about the community today, and how will I challenge them?
2. What steps did I take to ensure that my interactions respected participants' cultural values and experiences? How effective were they? What might I try differently?
3. Were there moments where I could have adapted my approach to be more inclusive?
4. What feedback or signals from the community did I notice, and how will I respond?
5. What personal biases may have influenced my decisions or communication? Keep in mind that biases are not always negative; they can sometimes help identify or resolve issues. In this situation, did they help, did they cause harm or strain a relationship? What might I have overlooked as a result? How will I stay aware of this bias moving forward?
6. What did I learn about the community that I can share with my team?
7. How can I apply these insights to improve program activities or engagement?
8. What did I learn or observe in this community today?



Community Feedback Form Template:

Why it matters: Community feedback is essential to ensure programs meet participants' needs, are inclusive, and respect cultural values. This form provides a structured way to gather input from participants, caregivers, and other community members.

How to use it: Distribute the feedback form at regular intervals, such as after program sessions, at programming milestones, or during community events. Ensure that participants understand the purpose of the feedback, and provide multiple ways to submit responses (paper, online, verbally, or through translation support). Use collected feedback to identify strengths, uncover areas for improvement, and guide future program adaptations.

Summary: Together, these tools support a cycle of engagement, reflection, and adaptation. By systematically understanding communities, reflecting on their practices, and incorporating participant feedback, programs can strengthen their cultural responsiveness, enhance program impact, and foster trust and partnerships with the communities they serve.

Purpose: To systematically collect input from community members to inform program improvements.

Community Feedback Form Template:

1. About You (Optional):

- Age:
- Gender:
- Language(s) spoken:
- Relationship to the program:
(Participant / Caregiver / Staff / Other)

2. Program Experience:

- What aspects of the program did you find most helpful?
- What aspects could be improved?
- Were the materials and activities culturally relevant and easy to understand? Yes / No
- If no, please explain:

3. Accessibility & Inclusivity:

- Did you feel welcomed and respected in the program? Yes / No
- Did you encounter any barriers to participation? Yes / No
- If yes, please describe:

4. Suggestions and Feedback:

- How can we meet the needs of you and your community better?
- Any additional comments or ideas:

Program Adaptation and Community Assessment Checklists



Program Adaptation Checklist:

A. Cultural Relevance

- ☐ Materials adapted for language and imagery
- ☐ Activities reflect community customs and values
- ☐ Community priorities integrated into program goals
- ☐ Engagement strategies align with cultural expectations

B. Delivery Adaptations

- ☐ Staff reflective or trained
- ☐ Location/schedule adapted
- ☐ Format adapted
- ☐ Support services added

C. Community Partnership

- ☐ Co-design sessions held
- ☐ Cultural orgs consulted
- ☐ Feedback incorporated

D. Ethical Practices

- ☐ Cultural practices respected
- ☐ Community recommendations implemented and honored
- ☐ Misalignment risks addressed

Community Assessment Checklist:

A. Cultural Landscape

- ☐ Demographics identified
- ☐ Cultural groups and traditions mapped out
- ☐ Language needs assessed
- ☐ Strengths/assets identified
- ☐ Barriers documented

B. Information Sources

- ☐ Surveys
- ☐ Focus Groups
- ☐ Community leaders
- ☐ Community-based organizations
- ☐ Public data sources
- ☐ Organizational data

Section 5:



Training & Workforce Development

A program is only as effective as the people who implement it. Workforce development ensures that staff have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to deliver culturally responsive, equitable, and inclusive services. This section focuses on key competencies for staff, offering both conceptual guidance and practical tools for training, self-assessment, and ongoing professional growth. The competencies included in this section are essential for building a workforce that can engage with communities respectfully, thoughtfully, and equitably.

Cultural Humility

Definition: Cultural humility is the ongoing practice of self-reflection, acknowledging personal biases, and recognizing the limits of one's own knowledge about other cultures. It emphasizes community partnership and respect for lived experiences.

Key Learning Goals:

- Recognize and reflect on personal biases.
- Value and incorporate the perspectives of community members.
- Engage in lifelong learning about different cultures and experiences.



Support Template: Cultural Humility Self-Reflection Checklist

Prompt	Reflection	Action Steps
What assumptions did I notice about this community today?		
How did I seek to understand perspectives different from my own?		
Where could I improve in listening or partnering with community members?		
What learning goal will I set for myself this month regarding cultural humility?		

Trauma-Informed Practice

Definition: Trauma-informed practice recognizes the prevalence and impact of trauma and emphasizes safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment in all interactions.

Key Learning Goals:

- Recognize and reflect on personal biases.
- Value and incorporate the perspectives of community members.
- Engage in lifelong learning about different cultures and experiences.



Support Template: Trauma-Informed Practice Observation Tool

Setting / Interaction	e.g., Intake Session
Indicators of Trauma Sensitivity	Staff explained confidentiality and gave a choice in participation
Areas for Improvement	Staff could improve their body language to show openness
Proposed Adaptation	Provide training on non-verbal cues

Anti-Bias Practice

Definition: Anti-bias practice involves recognizing, addressing, and actively working to counteract personal and systemic biases that can affect decision-making, interactions, and program delivery.

Key Learning Goals:

- Identify explicit and implicit biases.
- Challenge stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors.
- Create policies and practices that promote equity.



Support Template: Anti-Bias Reflection Worksheet

Situation/ Encounter	e.g., Staff meeting discussion
Bias Observed	Assumption about participant ability
Impact on Decision/ Interaction	Could influence service planning
Alternative Action/Response	Consider individual strengths and needs rather than assumptions

Inclusive Communication

Definition: Inclusive communication ensures that language, messaging, and interactions are accessible, respectful, and affirming for all participants, regardless of background, language, or participant ability.

Key Learning Goals:

- Use language that is respectful, clear, and free of stereotypes.
- Adapt communication methods to meet diverse needs.
- Listen actively and respond appropriately to all participants.



Support Template: Inclusive Communication Checklist

Interaction Type	Program orientation
Inclusive Practice Observed	Materials available in multiple languages
Improvement Needed	More visual supports for low-literacy participants
Action Plan	Develop pictorial guides and infographics

Understanding Inequities

Definition: Understanding inequities involves recognizing how social, economic, and historical factors shape access, outcomes, and opportunities for different populations.

Key Learning Goals:

- Identify structural and systemic inequities affecting the community.
- Analyze program practices through an equity lens.
- Advocate for changes that reduce disparities.



Support Template: Equity Analysis Worksheet

Program Component	Outreach methods
Potential Inequity	May not reach non-English speakers
Evidence/ Observation	Attendance data shows low participation from immigrant communities
Action to Address Inequity	Translate materials; partner with community leaders
Responsible Person/Timeline	Outreach coordinator, next quarter

Summary

Training and workforce development are ongoing processes that require reflection, practice, and adaptation. By developing these competencies—cultural humility, trauma-informed practice, anti-bias practice, inclusive communication, and understanding inequities—staff are better equipped to engage communities with respect, understanding, and effectiveness. The provided templates enable staff to self-assess, document their learning, and plan actionable improvements, ultimately creating a stronger, culturally responsive workforce.



Staff Cultural Humility Self-Assessment

Rate 1 - 5, where:

1 = Rarely/Never

5 = Always

A. Awareness

- ☐ I reflect on how my identity shapes interactions
- ☐ I recognize my biases
- ☐ I understand systemic inequities

B. Delivery Adaptations

- ☐ I know key cultural norms of communities served
- ☐ I seek to understand different perspectives
- ☐ I learn through respectful engagement

C. Community Partnership

- ☐ I adapt communication
- ☐ I check for understanding
- ☐ I use inclusive language
- ☐ I respond respectfully to misunderstandings

D. Ethical Practices

- ☐ I speak up when I see inequity
- ☐ I support organizational change
- ☐ I collaborate with cultural organizations

Section 6:



Monitoring, Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

Monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement are critical for ensuring programs are effective, equitable, and responsive to community needs. This section guides the collection, analysis, and utilization of data in ways that respect community perspectives, promote equity, and inform program enhancements. Evaluation is not just about measuring outputs or outcomes—it's about learning, adapting, and improving programs while centering the voices of those served. The evaluation questions in this section help programs approach assessment with equity, cultural responsiveness, and collaboration in mind.

Key Evaluation Questions

1. **Who defines success?** Success should be defined in partnership with the community, rather than solely by funders or program staff. Community-defined outcomes ensure programs are meaningful, relevant, and respectful of local priorities.
2. **Are outcomes equitable?** Assess whether all participant groups benefit equally and whether the program addresses disparities. Consider differences across age, race/ethnicity, gender, language, disability, or other social determinants of health.
3. **Is data collected respectfully?** Ensure that data collection methods are culturally appropriate, voluntary, and protect participant confidentiality. Avoid practices that could cause harm, discomfort, or reinforce stigma.
4. **Is the community included in the interpretation?** Involve community members in reviewing and interpreting evaluation data. This ensures findings reflect lived experience and that program adaptations are relevant and actionable.

Equity-Focused Evaluation Plan Template



Purpose: Guides programs in planning evaluations that are culturally responsive and equity-centered.

Section	Guiding Questions	Notes/Examples
Evaluation Goals	What are we trying to learn or achieve?	Include community priorities
Success Criteria	How will we define success? Who decides?	Include community-defined indicators
Participants & Stakeholders	Who will provide input? How are diverse voices included?	Identify representatives from all key groups
Data Collection Methods	What methods will we use? Are they respectful and inclusive?	Surveys, focus groups, interviews; consider language & accessibility
Equity Considerations	How will we ensure outcomes are equitable?	Stratify results by demographic characteristics
Community Involvement	How will community members participate in interpretation?	Form advisory groups, co-analysis sessions
Continuous Improvement Plan	How will results inform program changes?	Document adaptations and follow-up actions



Community Feedback & Evaluation Form

Purpose: Collect structured input from participants and community members on program effectiveness, inclusivity, and relevance.

Community Feedback & Evaluation Form:

1. About You (Optional):

- Age:
- Gender:
- Race:
- Ethnicity:
- Language(s) spoken:
- Relationship to the program:
(Participant / Caregiver / Staff / Other)

2. Program Experience:

- What aspects of the program were most valuable?
- What could be improved to meet your needs better?
- Did you feel the program respected your culture and background? Yes / No
- If no, please explain:

3. Equity & Inclusion:

- Do you feel all participants are treated fairly? Yes / No
- If no, please explain:
- Are there barriers preventing you or others from participating fully? Yes / No
- If yes, please describe:

4. Community Participation in Evaluation:

- Would you like to be involved in reviewing results and planning improvements? Yes / No



Continuous Improvement Action Plan Template

Purpose: Tracks findings from evaluation and community feedback and converts them into actionable steps for program enhancement.

Finding/Observation	e.g., Low participation among Spanish-speaking participants
Source (Data/ Feedback)	Attendance data, community survey
Recommended Action	Translate materials; recruit bilingual staff
Responsible Person	Program Coordinator
Timeline	Next quarter
Status/Notes	In progress

Reflective Evaluation Checklist



Purpose: Tracks findings from evaluation and community feedback and converts them into actionable steps for program enhancement.

Questions	Yes/No	Notes/Actions
Were diverse community voices included in defining success?		
Were data collection methods culturally sensitive and voluntary?		
Did evaluation results identify any inequities or gaps?		
Were community members engaged in interpreting findings?		
Did the evaluation lead to meaningful program adaptations?		

Summary

Monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement are dynamic, participatory processes that help programs remain responsive, equitable, and effective. By answering the guiding questions, using the templates, and engaging programs throughout, programs can:

- Recognize and reflect on personal biases.
- Value and incorporate the perspectives of community members.
- Engage in lifelong learning about different cultures and experiences.

Section 7:



Other Tools and Support Templates

Culturally Responsive Evaluation Tool

A culturally responsive evaluation ensures that programs honor the experiences, values, and priorities of the communities they serve. Traditional evaluation methods often overlook cultural context, unintentionally reinforce bias, or miss indicators of success that matter most to participants. This tool helps organizations integrate equity into every stage of evaluation—from shaping questions to sharing findings, so data is gathered respectfully, interpreted accurately, and used to drive meaningful change. By centering community voice and cultural relevance, organizations build trust, improve outcomes, and create evaluations that genuinely reflect the lived realities of diverse communities.

01 Review each section (A-E) Review each section (A–E) to assess how well your evaluation practices align with culturally responsive principles.	02 Rate each item on a scale of 1–5 Rate each item on a scale of 1–5, where: 1 = Not yet in place 5 = Fully in place
03 Use team and community input Use team and community input whenever possible to ensure ratings reflect multiple perspectives.	04 Identify strengths and gaps Identify strengths and gaps by highlighting items rated 1–3 for improvement and items rated 4–5 as current strengths.
05 Develop an action plan Develop an action plan to enhance cultural responsiveness in your evaluation design, data collection, analysis, reporting, and improvement cycles.	06 Revisit the tool regularly Revisit the tool regularly to measure progress, ensure accountability, and maintain culturally grounded evaluation practices over time.



A. Evaluation Preparedness

- ☐ Community-shaped evaluation questions
- ☐ Success reflects cultural priorities
- ☐ Methods match cultural norms
- ☐ Consent processes accessible

B. Data Collection

- ☐ Data collectors trained or reflective
- ☐ Translated tools available
- ☐ Participant choice in communication
- ☐ Data collected respectfully

C. Data Analysis

- ☐ Data disaggregated
- ☐ Cultural context considered
- ☐ Community reviews findings

D. Reporting

- ☐ Findings shared in relevant formats
- ☐ Reports highlight strengths
- ☐ Community feedback shapes recommendations

E. Continuous Improvement

- ☐ Action plan created
- ☐ Changes communicated back
- ☐ Evaluation repeated

Continuous Improvement Cycle Checklist



A continuous improvement cycle ensures that programs evolve in ways that are equitable, community-centered, and culturally responsive. Without intentional review, inequities can go unnoticed, feedback may be overlooked, and programs risk reinforcing barriers rather than removing them. This checklist helps organizations consistently examine their data, decisions, and outcomes through a cultural and equity lens. By integrating community voice, monitoring implementation, and revisiting the cycle each year, organizations build accountability, strengthen trust, and ensure their services remain relevant, effective, and responsive to those they serve.

01 Review each item

Review each item to evaluate how well your organization engages in a culturally grounded continuous improvement process.

02 Rate each element 1–5

Rate each element on a scale of 1–5, where:

1 = Not started
5 = Fully in place

03 Use community input

Use community input through listening sessions, feedback loops, or advisory groups—to ensure ratings reflect lived experience.

04 Flag areas rated 1–3

Flag areas rated **1–3** as priorities for improvement and **4–5** as strengths to maintain.

05 Develop an action plan

Develop an action plan outlining changes needed in programs, workforce capacity, and implementation procedures.

06 Monitor progress over time

Monitor progress over time, making adjustments as needed to ensure changes are working as intended.

07 Repeat the cycle annually

Repeat the cycle annually to build long-term accountability, measure progress, and continuously enhance cultural responsiveness and equity.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Data reviewed with a cultural lens | ☐ Workforce trained |
| ☐ Equity gaps identified | ☐ Implementation monitored |
| ☐ Community listening sessions held | ☐ Cycle repeated annually |
| ☐ Program changes recommended | |

Community Feedback Form



Community feedback is essential for building programs that are truly responsive, inclusive, and culturally grounded. This form ensures that participants have a direct voice in shaping services—highlighting what is working well and where improvements are needed. By asking about respect, cultural relevance, and accessibility, organizations can identify equity gaps, strengthen trust, and make meaningful changes that reflect the lived experiences of the communities they serve. Collecting and acting on this feedback supports transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

01 Share the form widely

Share the form widely in person, online, or through community partners to reach a diverse range of participants.

02 Invite individuals to rate each item

Invite individuals to rate each item in Sections A and B based on their experience with your program or service.

03 Ensure accessibility

Ensure accessibility by offering the form in multiple languages, formats, and reading levels.

04 Encourage open feedback

Encourage open feedback by reviewing the “Improvements” and “Strengths” sections for detailed insights and themes.

05 Analyze responses regularly

Analyze responses regularly to identify patterns related to respect, cultural fit, and accessibility.

06 Use findings to inform program adjustments

Use findings to inform program adjustments and share back with the community how their input influenced decisions.

07 Repeat the feedback process

Repeat the feedback process periodically to track progress and maintain a strong feedback loop.

A. Accessibility & Inclusion

- ☐ Data reviewed with a cultural lens
- ☐ Equity gaps identified
- ☐ Community listening sessions held

B. Cultural Fit

- ☐ Program changes recommended
- ☐ Workforce trained
- ☐ Cycle repeated annually

C. Improvements: (Open Feedback)

D. Strengths: (Open Feedback)

Culturally Responsive Facilitation Checklist



Facilitation plays a critical role in shaping whether participants feel safe, included, and respected. A culturally responsive facilitator actively acknowledges identities, reduces power imbalances, and creates space for all voices to be heard. This checklist helps ensure that facilitators are intentional about cultural humility, using accessible language, practicing trauma-informed approaches, and providing inclusive examples. By following these guidelines, organizations can foster trust, prevent harm, and create learning environments where participants from diverse backgrounds can engage meaningfully. Consistent use of this tool also supports professional growth and continuous improvement in facilitation practices.

01 Review the checklist before your session Review the checklist before your session to prepare and plan culturally responsive facilitation strategies.	02 Use the checklist during or immediately after facilitation Use the checklist during or immediately after facilitation to self-assess or team-assess how effectively cultural responsiveness was demonstrated.
03 Rate each item 1–5 Rate each item 1–5, where: 1 = Not evident 5 = Fully demonstrated	04 Gather input from participants or co-facilitators Gather input from participants or co-facilitators to ensure an accurate and holistic assessment.
05 Identify items rated 1–3 Identify items rated 1–3 as improvement priorities and incorporate them into future facilitation planning or professional development.	06 Document feedback Document feedback and key observations to track progress over time.
07 Revisit the checklist regularly Revisit the checklist regularly to support ongoing learning and maintain a consistently inclusive and culturally grounded facilitation approach.	
☐ Facilitator demonstrates cultural humility ☐ Group norms address culture and safety ☐ Language is accessible ☐ Identities acknowledged respectfully ☐ Examples are inclusive	☐ Power dynamics monitored ☐ Trauma-informed strategies used ☐ Misunderstandings addressed ☐ Interpreters used effectively ☐ Feedback gathered

Section 8:



Resource Library

SAMHSA TIP 59: Improving Cultural Competence

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Improving Cultural Competence. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series No. 59. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14 4849. Rockville, MD: SAMHSA; 2014. [NCBI+2GovInfo+2](#)
- Summary resource: “TIP 59: Improving Cultural Competence – Quick Guide for Clinicians/Administrators” (PDF), SAMHSA. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK248428/>
- Description: TIP 59 offers a comprehensive framework for integrating cultural competence into behavioral health and substance use services — addressing individual clinician competencies, program-level practices, organizational strategies, cultural assessment, and culturally responsive treatment planning.

National CLAS Standards (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services)

- Office of Minority Health (OMH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National CLAS Standards. Web resource provided by Think Cultural Health. [Think Cultural Health](#)
- Description: The 15-action-step National CLAS Standards provide a blueprint for health and health care organizations to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services — part of an organizational commitment to quality care and equity.

American Psychological Association (APA) — Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality

- American Psychological Association. Multicultural Guidelines: An Ecological Approach to Context, Identity, and Intersectionality. 2017 (update of earlier Multicultural Guidelines). [American Psychological Association](#)
- Description: These guidelines provide evidence-based guidance for psychologists and behavioral health professionals who work with ethnically, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse clients — emphasizing identity, intersectionality, context, and systemic factors relevant to culturally responsive care.



National Council for Mental Wellbeing — resources for culturally responsive behavioral health programs

- While there is not a single “manual” equivalent to TIP 59 or the CLAS Standards, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing maintains a set of resources, toolkits, policy briefs, and publications aimed at promoting equitable, culturally responsive care and reducing disparities in mental health and substance use — including materials on diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), culturally responsive practices, and workforce development.
- Suggested way to cite / link: “National Council for Mental Wellbeing – Resources & Publications on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.” (Accessed [date], at <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/> ...) (You would insert the actual URL depending on which resources you reference.)

Clinical & Practice Foundations

Resource/Guideline	Description/Use
TIP 59: Improving Cultural Competence (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration — SAMHSA, 2014)	Core manual on integrating cultural competence into behavioral health services across individual, clinical, and organizational levels — with frameworks for culturally responsive assessment, treatment planning, evaluation, and staff competencies. NCBI+2SAMHSA+2
“Improving Cultural Competence – Quick Guide for Clinicians/Administrators” (SAMHSA)	A more concise, user friendly version of TIP 59 offering quick reference for clinicians and administrators on culturally competent practices. SAMHSA Library+1
Increasing Cultural Competence to Reduce Behavioral Health Disparities (from SAMHSA’s CAPT)	Prevention oriented guidance for behavioral health practitioners or program planners, offering tools to reduce disparities through culturally competent prevention strategies. Health Disparities Tools from the CAPT
National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) — Resource Library & Toolkits	A broad resource repository with numerous guides, checklists, self assessment tools, and curricula to strengthen cultural and linguistic competence across health and mental health systems. https://nccc.georgetown.edu/resources/title.php

Prevention, Equity, & Disparities-Focused Resources



Resource/Guideline	Description/Use
Increasing Cultural Competence to Reduce Behavioral Health Disparities (see above)	Helps embed equity and cultural competence into prevention strategies and programming — useful for upstream work (prevention, outreach, community engagement). Suicide Prevention Resource Center
SAMHSA Technical Assistance Centers & T/TA Resources	A network of TA centers that support implementation of integrated, equitable behavioral health services — including centers for AI/AN behavioral health; culturally responsive crisis systems; integrated health-behavioral care; workforce development; and more. Useful for organizations needing training or support to operationalize culturally responsive services. SAMHSA+2SAMHSA+2
2025 National Guidelines for a Behavioral Health Coordinated System of Crisis Care (including cultural and linguistic appropriateness)	Offers an updated crisis care framework emphasizing culturally and linguistically appropriate services — especially relevant if your programs cover crisis intervention or after-hours support. 988 Crisis Systems Help



Population-Specific & Specialized Resources

Resource/Guideline	Description/Use
SAMHSA resources focused on American Indian / Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations (see above two entries)	Provide culturally grounded, community informed practices and evidence-based interventions; important for tailoring services to specific racial/ethnic groups, and for equity in access and outcomes. SAMHSA+1
NCCC’s “Guides for Using Cultural & Linguistic Competence Assessments” (for organizations serving children, youth, families, special needs)	Offers tools and checklists to assess and improve organizational cultural competence across diverse populations (e.g. youth, families with special health care needs) — helpful when working with diverse client bases. nccc.georgetown.edu
Materials on “Conscious and Unconscious Biases in Health Care” (from NCCC)	Useful for training staff and building awareness about implicit bias, systemic inequities, and culturally responsive care practices — supports workforce development and organizational culture change. nccc.georgetown.edu

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